

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03 NEA-10

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R 190830Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4569

USIA WASHDC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 VALLETTA 1494

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJ: CONTINUED USIS PRESENCE IN MALTA

1. WHILE I AM NOT CURRENT WITH CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON USIA BUDGET REQUEST SINCE SENATE VOTE ON MAY 30, I WISH TO EXPRESS MY STRONG FEELINGS ON THE POSSIBILITY THAT USIS VALLETTA MIGHT BE CLOSED. I SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING FOR CONSIDERATION.

2. THE DECISION OF USIA TO ESTABLISH USIS MALTA IN 1971 WAS MADE AFTER A THOROUGH--AND NEAR PROPHEIC-- EVALUATION OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF A LABOR PARTY ELECTORAL VICTORY. THE BANNING OF SIXTH FLEET PORT CALLS ELIMINATED "OPERATION HANDCLASP", FLEET CULTURAL PROGRAMS, LIBRARY DONATIONS AND A MULTIPLICITY OF ORGANIZED (USO) AND PRIVATE AMERICAN-MALTESE PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACTS THAT, AT A MINIMUM, LEFT A RESIDUAL GOODWILL STILL SPOKEN OF TODAY, AND, AT A MAXIMUM DEMONSTRATED BROADLY THE POSITIVE SIDE OF THE AMERICAN CHARACTER--GENEROSITY, OPENNESS, FRIENDSHIP AND A GENUINE REGARD FOR THE LESS FORTUNATE.

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3. THE LOSS OF THIS VISIBLE AND PERIODIC REMINDER OF

AMERICAN INTEREST IN A SUPPORT FOR MALTA HAS SINCE 1971, BEEN COMPOUNDED BY THE RISING PROFILE OF INIMICAL THIRD-COUNTRY POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND INFORMATIONAL PROGRAMS.

4. THE LARG CONTRIBUTIONS TO CARNIVAL, FARTHER MINTOFF'S (PRIME MINISTER'S BROTHER) PEACE LABORATORY, HEALTH AND AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS, THE TRADE FAIR PAVILLION(EIGHT TIMES THE SIZE OF THE U.S. BOOTH), AND THE PRINTING OF A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER PACKED WITH ANTI-U.S., ANIT WEST PROPAGANDA MUST MAKE A DECIDED IMPRESSION ON EVEN THE MOST PRO-WESTERN MALTESE.

5. THE PRC NOW HAS THE LARGEST DIPLOMATIC ESTABLISHMENT ON THE ISLAND AND EXTENDS CONTANT INVITATIONS TO TRADE UNIONISTS, NEWSPAPER EDITORS AND RANKING CIVIL SERVANTS TO ATTEND SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EVENTS AT THE EMBASSY. RECENTLY A S.R.O. AUDIENCE FILLED MALTA'S LARGEST AUDITORIAM OF FIVE NIGHTS RUNNING-- AN UNPARALLELED RESPONSE IN THE HEAT OF SUMMER- TO SEE THE SHANGHAI ACROBATS AND LISTEN TO AN INTRODUCTORY PAEAN TO THE PRINCIPLES OF MAO RECITED BY THE PERMANENT SECRETARY IN THE GOM MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. "CHINA PICTORIAL" AND NEW CHINA NEWS FEATURES CIRCULATED FREELY OVER THE ISLAND AND ARE REPRINTED IN THE VERNACULAR PRESS.

6. THE SOVIETS, NOT TO BE OUTDONE, HAVE INSTALLED AN ACTIVE AND HIGHLY COMPETENT HUSBAND-AND-WIFE TEAM AS "TASS" CORRESPONDENTS. TRADE UNION LEADERS HAVE BEEN INVITED TO THE USSR, AND MORE RECENTLY THEY ARE SPONSORING THAT VISIT TO TWO ROYAL UNIVERSITY STUDENT LEADERS TO MOSCOW.

7. OUR ABILITY TO SUPPORT OUR SECOND MAJOR U.S. POLICY OBJECTIVE (VALLETTA A-92, POLICY ASSESSMENT) OF "CONTINUATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF MALTA'S CLOSE TIES OF THE WEST " IS HEAVILY DEPENDENT, IN MY VIEW ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH WE CAN MAINTAIN SOME POSITIVE AND COUNTER-BALANCING INFLUENCE WITH MALTESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, POLITICAL LEADERS, MEDIA EXECUTIVES AND CULTURAL AND ACADEMIC OPINION LEADERS.

8. PRIOR TO THE OPENING OF USIS MALTA, AND IN A CLIMATE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ESSENTIALLY NO UNFRIENDLY OPPOSITION OR COMPETITION, THE MISSION, IN THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS FIELD, WAS LIMITED TO DISTRIBUTING SOME FILMS AND FEATURES PASSED ON FROM USIS ROME, AND TO SCHEDULING THE IVP VISITS OF ONE OR TWO MALTESE GRANTEES PER YEAR. ON A PERSONAL CONTACT BASIS, WE, OF COURSE, FARED MUCH BETTER AND HAD EASY ACCCESS TO MOST OF THE OPINION LEADERS; IN OUR MEETINGS, HOWEVER, WE WERE FREQUENTLY UNABLE TO PRIVIDE THEM WITHTIMELY

DOCUMENTATION,REFERENCE BOOKS, OR BACKGROUND MATERIAL
SUITABLE FOR QUOTATION OR PLACEMENT, AND,EXCEPT FOR
SIXTH FLEET CONTRIBUTIONS LISTED ABOVE, WE WERE COMPLETELY
UNABLE TO RESPOND TO REQUESTS FOR AMERICAN CULTURAL PRESENTA-
TIONS AND BOOK DONATIONS.

9. THE FILLING-OUT OF THE MISSION COUNTRY TEAM THROUGH THE
ADDITION OF A PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER AND HIS SUPPORTING LOCAL
STAFF HAS GIVEN US A SIGNIFICANT ADDED CAPABILITY IN ADVANCING
OUR POLICY OBJECTIVES OVER THESE PAST TWO YEARS. USIS ACTIVITIES,
UNDER THE DIRECT GUIDANCE OF MYSELF AND THE DCM, ARE SHARPLY
FOCUSED ON SUBSTANTIVE U.S. SECURITY, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND
INFORMATIONAL INTERESTS, BASICALLY DIRECTED TOWARD THOSE
MALTESE WHO WE BELIEVE FORM OR INFLUENCE GOM DECISIONS- MAKING.
THROUGH THE RESOURCES AND CONTACTS OF THE USIS OFFIC, FOR
EXAMPLE, WE WERE ABLE TO INVITE PROMINENT AMERICAN ACADEMICS
AND U.S. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TO PRESENT U.S. POLICY POSITIONS

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AF-10 CU-04 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03

NEA-10 NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 TRSE-00 MBFR-03

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R 190830Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4570

USIA WASHDC

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(IN A MANNER AT ONCE MORE INFORMAL BUT ALSO MORE DIRECT
THAN THE EMBASSY MIGHT CARE TO) ON MEDITERRANEAN
SECURITY, TRADE AND MONETARY POLICY, TRADE UNIONISM
IN THE WEST, AND AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY.
AGAIN, DRAWING ON THE MODEST USIS BUDGET (BUT, AS IMPORTANT, ON

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE USIS OFFICER) WE ARRANGED FOR INFLUENTIAL CHURCH AND OPPOSITION OPINION LEADERS TO GAIN FIRSTHAND INSIGHTS OF AMERICAN MOOD AND POLICY THROUGH VOLUNTARY VISITORSHIPS BACKED WITH USIS PARTIAL GRANTS. WE ALSO ASSISTED IN PLACING MALTESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN U.S. GRADUATE SCHOOLS AND DOUBLED OUR PROGRAMMING OF INFLUENTIAL IVP GRANTEES (INCLUDING AN ACTIVIST-PRIEST, WHO IS INCIDENTALLY ALSO THE PRIME MINISTER'S BROTHER; THE EDITOR OF AN MLP SATIRICAL POLITICAL WEEKLY AND CLOSE CONFIDENT OF MINTOFF; THE PROGRAMS CHIEF OF MALTA TELEVISION; AND THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE GWU) DURING THE PERIOD.

10. ON THE INFORMATION SIDE, THE REFERENCE AND PERIODICAL COLLECTION ON AMERICAN POLITICS, GOVERNMENT, ECONOMICS, HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IS IN CONSTANT USE BY MALTESE PARLIAMENTARIANS, MEDIA EDITORS AND COMMENTATORS, UNIVERSITY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL FACULTY AND YOUTH LEADERS. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHEN MINTOFF INTRODUCED LEGISLATION ON THE EMERGENCY LABOR CORPS IN PARLIAMENT, HE READ FROM AN AMERICAN HISTORY BOOK DESCRIBING ROOSEVELT'S CCC PROGRAM --BOROWED FROM THE USIS OFFICE TWO DAYS EARLIER.

11. IT IS ONLY THROUGH USIS CONTACTS AND RESOURCES THAT THE EMBASSY IS ABLE TO BE AT ALL RESPONSIVE TO MALTESE REQUESTS--AND EXPECTATIONS- IN THE CULTURAL FIELD. OUR TWO CONCERTS AT THE MANOEL THEATER AND TWO ART EXHIBITS AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM WERE ATTENDED BY LEADING POLITICAL AND MEDIA FIGURES--DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ANTON BUTTIGIEG COMMENDED THE EMBASSY INITIATIVE AT A MUSEUM RECEPTION AND WROTE A POEM IN PRAISE OF THE AMERICA ARTIST.

12. THE PERSISTENT CONTACT WORK DONE BY THE USIS STAFF OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS HAS ALSO PAID SIGNIFICANT DIVIDENDS IN TV, RADIO AND PRESS PLACEMENT OF NEWS ITEMS, FEATURES AND COMMENTARY IN SUPPORT OF ALL THREE POLICY OBJECTIVES DESCRIBED IN OUR ASSESSMENT REPORT. THE WIRELESS FILE, WHICH IS ONLY FINANCIALLY FEASIBLE IF BUDGETED BY USIS IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT SOURCE OF PRESIDENTIAL, CONGRESSIONAL, STATE AND DEFENSE POLICY STATEMENTS AND GUIDANCE AVAILABLE TO GOM OFFICIALS, THE MEDIA AND, NOT LEAST, MISSION STAFF AND CONTACTS. RECENTLY A USIS/DAO INITIATIVE RESULTED IN WIDE PRESS PLAY AND COMMENTARY ON PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S APPRECIATION OF THE SIXTH FLEET PRESENCE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. PRIOR TO MISSION EFFORTS, NO MALTESE MEDIA HAD PICKED UP THE STORY. TEXTS AND EDITORIAL COMMENT ON SECRETARY'S ROGERS' AND DR. KISSINGER'S RECENT FOREIGN POLICY SPEECHES WERE PICKED UP THE TIMES OF MALTA ONLY AFTER USIS PERSONAL CONTACT WORK.

13. IN SUMMARY, I GENUINELY BELIEVE THAT THE CLOSING OR REDUCTION OF THE USIS OPERATION IN MALTA WOULD DEPRIVE THE MISSION OF ONE OF OUR MOST SUCCESSFUL AND EFFECTIVE ELEMENTS IN ADVANCING U.S. POLICY OBJECTIVES AND BASIC WESTERN INTERESTS. A FURTHER CONCERN IS THE REACTION WE WOULD HAVE TO EXPECT FROM GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION QUARTERS ALIKE. NATIONALISTS MIGHT EASILY VIEW THIS DIMINISHING OF U.S. PRESENCE AS A STUDIED AND PREMEDITATED INDICATION OF DECREASED INTEREST AND LACK OF SUPPORT. LABORITES MAY WELL CALL INTO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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QUESTION THE REASONS FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THE USIS POST IN THE FIRST PLACE, I.E., JUST PRIOR TO ELECTIONS, WITH THE NATIONALISTS IN POWER. NEITHER SIDE, NOR FOR THAT MATTER INDEPENDENTS (CHURCH LEADERS, UNIVERSITY FACULTY), WILL FIND THE EXPLANATION OF BUDGET REDUCTION ENTIRELY CREDIBLE.

14. FURTHER, IF USIS ACTIVITIES WERE TO CEASE, WE MUST REALISTICALLY ANTICIPATE THAT THE MISSION WOULD IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER BE FORCED TO ABSORB AND MAINTAIN A NUMBER OF THE SERVICES THAT USIS HAD BEGUN, WITH RESULTANT STAFF AND FINANCIAL COSTS. THE LOSS OF THE "LISTENING POST" ASPECT OF THE USIS OFFICES ON KINGWAYS, ONE BLOCK FROM PARLIAMENT, THE MINISTRY OF COMMONWEALTH AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE LEADING NEWSPAPER, IS ALSO A NON-QUANTIFIABLE BUT TANGIBLE CONCERN. THE LIST OF PARLIAMENTARIANS, MEDIA CONTACTS AND YOUTH LEADERS WHO NOW EASILY WANDER IN TO USIS BEFORE GOING TO LUNCH OR ON THE WAY TO THEIR OFFICES IS QUITE IMPRESSIVE.

15. TO BE CANDID, I ALSO WONDER IF THE BUDGETARY SAVINGS WOULD BE AN OVERALL GOVERNMENT NET FINANCIAL GAIN. USIA HAS A SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT (MORE THAN \$40,000 IN BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS, FURNISHINGS, ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROGRAM MATERIALS) AND LEASE COMMITMENTS THAT WOULD BE EXPENSIVE TO CANCEL. WITH A BASIC GOE OF UNDER \$55,000 PER YEAR, AND THE LOWEST SAS COSTS IN WESTERN EUROPE, I CAN'T HELP FEELING THAT CLOSING USIS MALTA WOULD BE AN EXPENSIVE LOSS TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT BUT ONLY A MARGINAL SAVINGS FOR USIA.
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